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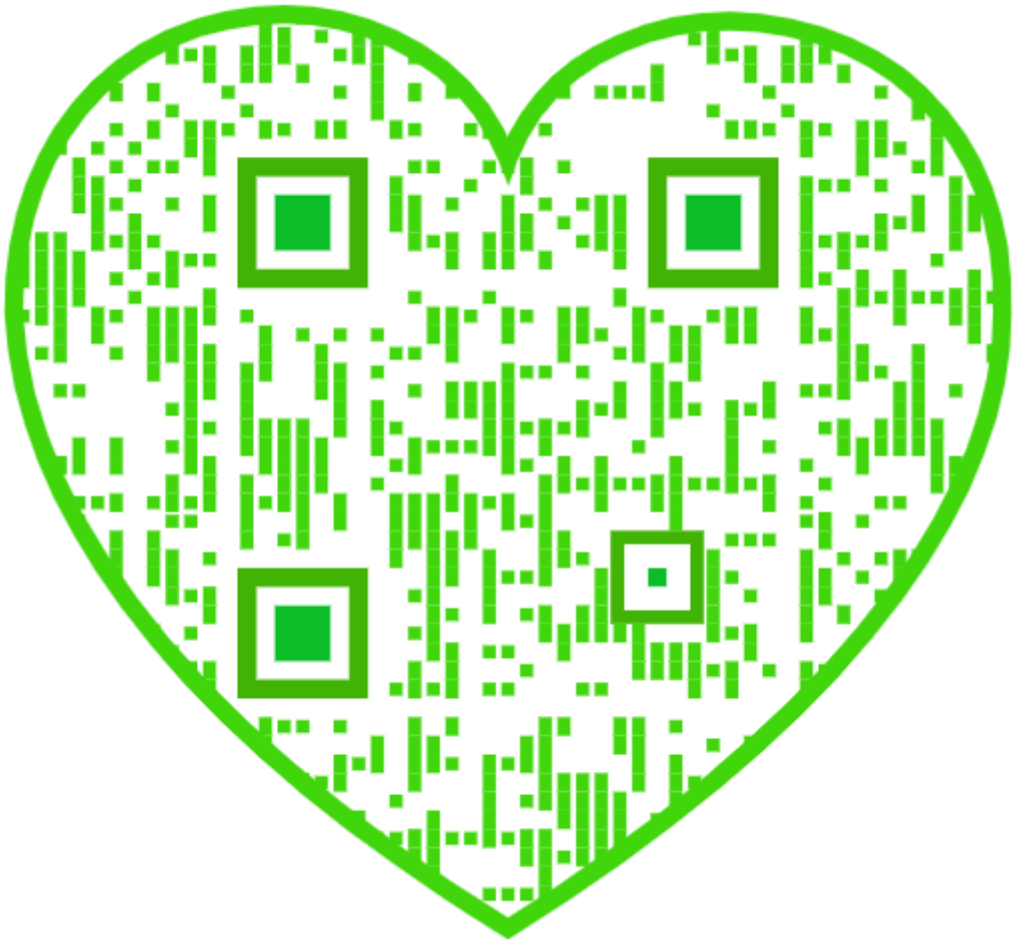
ETHICS AND
ODERN THOUGHT

RUDOLF EUCKEN



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The Truth of Religion

The Life of the Spirit

Religion and Life

Ethics and Modern Thought

Ethics and Modern Thought

A Theory of Their Relations

The Deem Lectures

Delivered in 1913 at New York University

By

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Translated from the German Manuscript by

Margaret von Seydewitz

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press
1913

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The Knickerbocker Press, New York

$1.00

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Acat. Nov 16-23 R.C.

PREFACE

THESE lectures, delivered at New York University from February 20th till March 1, 1913, appeal less to students and philosophers than to the cultured public at large. I take this opportunity of expressing my sincere gratitude to the New York University, and especially to Chancellor Elmer E. Brown, for all the kindness and interest shown to me during my stay in New York.

RUDOLF EUCKEN.

JENA, June, 1913.

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I

The Ethical Problem in the Present Time

I

THE ETHICAL PROBLEM IN THE PRESENT TIME

IN former times, nothing seemed more plausible and more certain than morality. It was a tower of strength, where men sought refuge in the midst of all the doubts and conflicts of life. This was especially the case during the Age of Enlightenment. Men were beginning to believe less absolutely in the religion handed down to them, but they clung all the more to morality. Metaphysical speculation and theoretical endeavours to reveal the innermost essence of things encountered growing opposition, yet morality was welcomed as something superior to all complications, and valuable to all. It was held to be the pivot of Archimedes, which gives stability to the whole of life.

In our days morality has ceased to be a

matter of such unquestionable certainty, and has been drawn into the wave of disintegration which is passing over our minds. Formerly the scientific definition and accurate conception of morality were matters of contention; but it is now the fundamental idea of morality that is questioned. Many of our contemporaries are of opinion that the revelations of modern science and the claims of modern life have destroyed the foundations of morality and made it untenable in the old sense. Morality in the old sense demands dissociation of our aspirations from our own personal interest, and devotion to something that is esteemed higher; whenever an action that appears good is seen to proceed from selfish motives, it can no longer claim any moral value. There is a widespread tendency in modern life, to question the possibility of such detachment from the *Ego*, and to acknowledge the coercion exercised over man by his instinct of self-preservation. Emancipation from this restraint is not even considered desirable, for constant strife and

competition seem necessary to life and progress, and a softening of this strife would inevitably reduce the energy of life.

Morality further demands independence and spontaneity of action. An action performed under the pressure of external coercion or mechanical habit, loses immediately its moral character. Now such independence and spontaneity are not possible apart from some kind of free choice, yet this would contradict the law of causality, which in the present age is generally considered to rule the whole of reality. In man's soul, the supremacy of this law of causality is strengthened by our growing insight into the power of heredity and of social environment. Yet morality in the old sense stands and falls with man's power of spontaneous and independent decision.

It is difficult also for morality to retain in modern life the position and estimation it formerly enjoyed. It used to be invested with unique significance, and placed high above all other manifestations of the inner

life. This conviction found its strongest expression at times of great historical import. We all remember the words of Jesus: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" The same conviction is expressed in philosophical language by the greatest antique philosopher and the greatest modern philosopher: Plato and Kant. Plato says: "All the gold on the earth and under the earth is less precious than virtue." Kant says: "If righteousness should perish, it would not be worth while for men to inhabit the earth."

But this conviction of the absolute supremacy of the moral task requires an inner gradation of life, for which modern conditions offer no scope. For modern life subordinates all aspiration and endeavour to the aim of enhancing the process of life. Every action is valued as a means to this end; and morality could only hold its own as an instrument of human welfare. But such degradation of morality would mean annihilation of morality. The present time is not entirely

dominated by such a movement against morality, only a few currents of thought are so absolute in their negation of ethical claims. But these currents could never have attained the strength and expansion they undoubtedly exhibit, if in our day morality were more securely established and more distinctly formulated. It is the want of union in moral ideals (never before so strongly marked) which gives added power to the enemies of morality.

There are to-day no less than four kinds of morality, often crossing and opposing each other, which claim men's allegiance. These are:

Religious Morality,

The Morality of Reason or of immanent idealism,

The Morality of Work,

Social Morality.

Religious Morality and the Morality of Reason have come down to us from past ages, and grow out of an inner world of

thought. The Morality of Work and Social Morality are specific results of the present time, growing out of work in a visible world of realities. The two older forms of morality form an antithesis to the two newer forms, as will hereafter be seen.

The most effectual kind of morality is still the religious one—for us, the morality associated with Christianity, the religion of ethical redemption. Christianity, which is founded on a holy will superior to the world, exalts moral action far above arbitrary human choice and human aim. It completely severs moral action from all natural inclination, dissociates it from all external performance, and gives it a purely spiritual character. It supplies a most powerful impulse to action, by connecting man's destiny with his attitude to his moral obligations. The awakening and ennobling power inherent in Christianity was not confined to individuals, but was embodied in a large section of the human race, creating a spiritual atmosphere which still acts powerfully on individual souls, even if they them-

selves are not conscious of it. Religious morality still continues to influence us in this way. All other kinds of morality could not be as effectual as they are, were they not constantly supplemented and deepened by religious morality.

And yet we cannot ignore the fact that in our day the supremacy of religious morality is often contested. The world of religion no longer encompasses man as a matter of course, and this also weakens its moral influence. At the same time many objections are raised against the nature and demands of religious morality. Owing to the closer connection between man's endeavour and his environment and to the accentuation of the struggle for existence, this kind of morality appears too mild, too soft, too subjective, and there is often a desire for a sterner and more virile kind. Religious ethics do not seem to have sufficient latitude to transform the whole of life. We can therefore understand the widespread desire for something which can sufficiently supplement religious ethics.

At all periods of higher civilisation, religious morality has been supplemented and completed by the morality of reason, which was developed above all by the philosophers, from the Stoics down to Kant and Fichte. Here morality does not proceed from a superior and divine will, but from man's own reasonable nature. This nature seems to demand recognition of a universal law, and voluntary submission to it; only then does man bring his own being to perfection. The morality arising herefrom is strong and manly; it incites man to a proud independence of spirit, and exalts him far above everyday life. To this morality of reason we owe the scientific development of the moral world of thought, and the distinct formulation of conceptions like Duty and Conscience. By means of such conceptions, the morality of reason also influences our own time, without however taking the lead, as it did during the Age of Enlightenment. The idea of reason as the sure foundation of our spiritual life is no longer universally

accepted, and has little influence on the man of to-day. He is too fully conscious of his subordination to the world of sense, of which he is a member, to be able to enfranchise himself completely from it, and to assert his own superior power. The rationalistic conception of life reckons with strong, self-centred personalities, who, as we know, do not abound in our time.

Morality could not be in close touch with the movements and problems of the present day, if—either as religious or as rational morality—it were inseparable from belief in an invisible world. But the latest development of life supplies morality with valuable motives derived from the visible world, and even creates new specific forms of morality. On the one hand, the impulse comes from modern work; on the other hand, from modern society. In both cases, we have forces that were always at work, but that gain considerable significance from the conditions of modern life.

All really earnest work is directed towards

some object which it seeks to penetrate; it impels us to value the object for its own sake, and to treat it according to its own requirements. Man is thus exalted above his own personal opinion and inclination. Only in modern times has work reached its full development as a factor of education and of moral culture. For work has now become more and more independent of separate individuals; it is becoming a concern common to all mankind, and it forms its own great complexes. Such a complex is modern science. It is no longer dependent on individuals, but has formed a fabric of its own. In accordance with the development it has attained, science dictates to individuals the channels and methods of their work, presents problems to be solved, and indicates the means of their solution. The individual works in vain, if he detaches himself from the movement of the whole. His enrolment in the movement of the whole imparts to life a distinctly ethical character. For the individual must subordinate himself com-

pletely to the demands of the whole; he must repress everything bearing upon his own will and desire; he must feel that his own efforts are part of the great sum of human endeavour, the promotion of which must be his highest satisfaction. Single workers come and go, but through the work of generations the proud edifice of science is ever growing. As Bacon says: "*Multi pertransibunt et augebitur scientia.*" (Many will pass by, and science will grow.)

What applies to science is equally true of the other provinces of life. In modern times, mighty complexes are everywhere springing up, which encompass individuals with their superior power. We see this above all in technical and industrial work, but also in state organisation, in education with its schools and so forth. All these finally unite in the comprehensive conception of civilisation and culture,—in the idea of man's supremacy over the world by means of his work.

It is evident that a strong moral force is

here engendered. Without this ethical factor, without a constant enrolment and subordination, modern civilisation could never have reached its present development. Yet we cannot deny that this morality of work has inner limitations. The technical side of work does indeed repress and even destroy all individual will; but it is an open question in what temper the work is done, whether from love to the work or from petty and selfish motives. It is quite possible for a petty and narrow frame of mind to be accompanied by the greatest technical skill. Further work spurs on towards achievement, and the worker is judged by what he achieves. What becomes of his inner life, of his whole personality, is a matter of indifference. Here we are only parts of a structure, and are nothing at all in ourselves. This must become so more and more in proportion as work is specialised, and vitalises an ever smaller part of the individual's powers. Moreover the union of men which in this direction takes place, is only confined

to their common work. However closely connected they may be through their work, their individual principles and convictions can be very different, if not absolutely hostile. It is, in our day, above all, the social problem, which divides men into hostile factions. In one special direction—that of work—there is an ethical development of life; but we cannot base on it an inner entity of right and humanity. The morality thus developed is cold and impersonal; it lacks inner warmth, and cannot appeal to the whole personality.

In this respect, social morality is infinitely superior to the morality of work. For social morality proceeds from the immediate relation of man to man. Here also, something old and familiar acquires a new form and stronger influence. It was an old conviction that man could only develop in connection with his fellow-men, towards whom his activity was mainly directed. But what has re-cast the idea of society in a new mould, is the modern doctrine that men are not

united by their common relation to an invisible world—ruled either by a Divine Being or by an all-pervading Reason—but by their actual living together in the realm of experience. This modern doctrine points out that individuals not only meet during the course of their life, but that they are interdependent from the very beginning,—that union and life with others is a fundamental necessity for every human being. In developing this idea, modern sociology shows, by means of innumerable statistics, how the nature and welfare of the individual depends upon the condition of the whole. It tries to prove that all progress—even for the individual—is inseparable from the amelioration of the community at large; such amelioration therefore becomes the main object of endeavour. Modern sociology at the same time advocates the idea of a common responsibility, a solidarity of all human life and action. Strong motives are thus offered to the individual to direct his activity, beyond his own personal interest, towards the welfare of all, and to

find in work for the welfare of others—in "altruistic" action—the highest value of life.

The "social" ethics thus developed are further enhanced by the growing conviction that the traditional form of life in the community is capable—nay needful—of fundamental changes. Formerly the structure of society was above all aristocratic in character. The conduct of life was in the hands of a small minority. They alone acquired full development of all their powers and full possession of earthly goods, which the rest could only enjoy in part and through the agency of the favoured few. This division of mankind appeared to be too firmly established by the divine will or by a mysterious destiny for human endeavour to try and alter it. The modern man, in the consciousness of his power, by no means considers these things incapable of change. For him, it is a sublime task to suppress such distinctions, and to let "all that bears human features" (Fichte) participate in the work and enjoyment of life.

We can here discuss neither the possibility of solving this problem in all its bearings, nor the complications resulting therefrom. But we cannot deny the strong ethical stimulus of such a movement. It has resulted in an eager desire to strengthen the weak, to raise aspiring spirits, to oppose injustice, to eradicate suffering as far as possible, and to increase the enjoyment of life. In all this, there is much warmth and vigour, a strong feeling of responsibility, and recognition of the rights of others. No other ethical force so strongly influences the men of to-day, as the social idea; we see this in legislation, in education, in every relation of man to man. This idea counteracts egoism, and produces such a wealth of humane action, as was hardly ever witnessed at any period of the world's history.

But even here, in spite of so much that is admirable, inner limitations are evident. Life and morality are concentrated on activity for others. But this activity is more for man's external welfare than for that of his soul,—

more for the conditions of life than for life itself. Inner problems find too often only a secondary consideration and the personality as a whole is apt to be neglected. This morality of social activity believes in the existence of goodwill and its growth by means of external activity, and takes human virtue for granted. But it has nothing to offer that could allay the inner conflicts, or could overcome the dark, wild, and passionate element in man's soul. Nor does this kind of morality sufficiently realise what complications and passions are inseparable from life in the community: the strife for power and supremacy, the vanity and unreality which arise and rapidly spread among its members. Social morality shows a very optimistic conception of man, which is often contradicted by experience. However great therefore the merits of social morality may be in one special direction, it takes up the problem too superficially, and offers no firm foundation for morality„ which it presupposes rather than creates.

Morality to-day thus appears to be accompanied by much confusion and many complications. There is no lack of separate developments, but these cross and oppose each other. What one kind of morality takes to be its chief source of strength, appears to another to be mere weakness. The inner and spiritual character of the older forms is condemned by the younger forms as a subjective illusion, while the unremitting activity of the latter seem to their opponents to be an exclusive concentration on external work. Life as a whole has become uncertain to us in its deepest aspects; and we are no longer satisfied with the moral impulses coming from the life around us. We hesitate between absolutely different kinds of morality, which can only fully develop their individual characteristics by injuring one another; this must inevitably weaken the influence of morality on the whole of life. At the same time, movements hostile to morality encounter less opposition, and gain ground in spite of their inherent super-

ficiality. Morality, once an undoubted possession of mankind, has thus come to be a difficult problem; instead of ruling over man from the height of its superiority, it seems now to depend on his opinion and choice.

The condition of things resulting herefrom is becoming more and more unendurable. If morality is weakened, then life is robbed of a strong impulse, an ennobling power, and a dominant aim; it is in danger of inner insignificance and disintegration. The salt of life is then lacking, which alone can keep it fresh and healthy, and with all its outer brilliancy, it is threatened with inner decay. If we are to resist this danger with all our might, then science must help to overcome the uncertainty and want of concentration so characteristic of our time, and to gain full recognition of morality as a whole. To do this, it is above all necessary to find some point of view whence we can successfully combat this disintegration.

We shall therefore have to consider first of all how such a point of view may be attained.

II

The Ethical Principle

II

THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLE

THE intricate situation of to-day necessarily incites us to reflection. We must consider our life as a whole; we must ask ourselves whether human existence comprises various kinds and gradations of life, and whether a task thus arises which embraces all man's endeavour. There can be no doubt that human life is not confined to one single plane,—that all variety of endeavour does not easily unite to form a definite entity, but that heterogeneous elements meet and mingle in man.

Man at first appears to be part of nature, of the world of sense, subject to its laws and impulses. Dim and unreasonable instincts pervade man's soul with compelling force. Our conceptions grow out of sense impres-

sions, and form at first the purely mechanical concatenation which we term "association," while all our efforts are directed towards individual self-preservation. In all this, man is entirely within the limitations of nature. Yet though this natural life at first predominates, it does not represent the whole of our life. We become aware of new features, which we characterise as "spiritual." We see how man grows independent of his environment, and strives to subdue it from without and within. By thought he frees himself from the shackles of his environment, and asserts himself against the whole world; at the same time he is driven back to the world, and feels impelled to fathom it and to make it his own by personal experience. His actions do not always remain a mere part of nature's concatenations. He can detach himself from all cohesion. In unbridled egoism he can subordinate every event and action to his own well-being; or he can absorb into himself all that at first existed beside him and apart from him, and

that often appeared hostile, and can thus manifest boundless love and sympathy. His natural instinct of self-preservation will then appear too small and insignificant; he can even come to feel its narrow restrictions as intolerable.

If we pass from the individual to the whole of mankind, we see in civilisation and culture a new form of life opposed to mere nature. For man is no longer swayed and ruled by what assails him from without, but he confronts it with new aims and ideals. He judges and weighs; he approves and rejects; he forms new complexes, like those of state organisation and of science. In all this, man is the representative of a new and specific kind of life; he manifests an independence unknown to nature.

This new life differs from nature and from what may be attained on the basis of nature, not only in single characteristics, but in all its manifestations and even in its fundamental essence. Nature forms a tissue of separate elements, which come into recip-

rocal action but lack all inner cohesion. Great complexes are thus formed, but no combination amounts to real cohesion: there is no inner whole, and no life proceeding from such an inner entity.

All life grows out of contact with the environment; therefore intellectual participation is indissolubly bound to the world of sense. In this life of nature, the intellect can create no conceptions independent of sense impressions, and action cannot free itself from the power of natural impulse. All inner values can here be nothing more than an accessory and reminiscence of what reaches us from without.

We see something essentially different, wherever spiritual life develops. Here life is not decomposed into a multitude of separate particles, but inner cohesions are formed, which embrace and dominate all achievement of individual beings. This is especially the case when human thought aspires towards Truth. Every individual has his own sum of conceptions and his own

special associations; but he does not possess a truth of his own. All search for truth is based on the conviction that something must be acquired which is common to all men, and which embraces and governs them all. Aspiration thus extends far beyond separate individuals. We have here not a disconnected mass of assertion and dogma; all is gathered into a well ordered cohesion, and all separate efforts result in progression to the whole. Every kind of intellectual endeavour presents a similar situation. Thus the Good and the Beautiful are not values confined to single individuals; every man striving after them, only contributes towards the sum of common endeavour, and what he wins for himself is at the same time a gain for all. Aspiration is not confined to a limited number of separate results, but the manifestation of a great whole is sought for: a comprehensive realm of the good and the beautiful.

Once the mind is thus concentrated on the whole, greater spiritual independence in-

evitably ensues. For it is necessary to rise above the sense impression and constantly to assert the autonomy of the soul, if aspiration from the whole and to the whole is to be successfully developed. From being a mere accessory, the soul now becomes in all respects a source of independent life. In science ideas gain a significance of their own, apart from the impressions of sense; they develop their own laws, and react with transforming power on what they have absorbed, as we see in the case of mathematics. Our own mind supplies the forms in which we shape our world. Feeling also frees itself from sense impressions. Sense enjoyment no longer suffices for man's happiness. His relation to other human beings does not remain confined to external contact; pity and love can embrace the whole of mankind, as is proved by the great religions. We can no longer doubt man's capacity of aspiring to values far beyond external possessions; and his inner life, the development of his own individual personality may

become a matter of paramount importance to him.

But this inner life, with all its distinct manifestations, can cope successfully with the outer world and its forcible inroads, only by developing an inner realm which it extends to an independent world of its own. This does in reality take place. What was at first beside us and apart from us, can be transferred to the soul without merging into it. The antithesis between internal and external values, which at first seemed to disintegrate life, can be overcome, if spiritual endeavour absorbs the object and brings it into reciprocal action with spiritual forces. Where spiritual development is at its highest, life does not fluctuate between the subjective and objective, but unites both in itself, brings them into reciprocal action, and develops one by means of the other. Such a triumph over antitheses is to be seen most clearly in the province of art. Art is not merely capable of copying external objects as exactly as possible, or of rendering with the greatest

possible truth the feeling of the individual: really great art must embrace both factors and blend them to a perfect unity. This is how a real work of art is created, which then gives to life an inner expansion and a new reality.

As in art, so also in the other provinces human life. In the mutual relation of man to man, the spiritual phase by no means does away with all distinctions, but it exalts us above them, and embraces them all from a higher point of view. Individuals are not to be merged in a hazy and colourless whole, but in rising towards a higher life an inner communion becomes possible, within which even what is alien becomes to a certain extent our own. This enables men to understand each other, to put themselves in the place of one another, to find themselves in others. Man acquires in such communion a vaster self, which is not dependent on one tiny atom, but has a whole world of its own.

If scientific research is not to degenerate into barren scepticism, it must also overcome

the antithesis of the subjective and the objective. To do this, it assimilates external objects by means of thought, and strives to embrace at the same time both the inner man and the outer world, developing one by means of the other.

We observe everywhere this tendency to subject everything to the operation of spiritual forces—to create and develop an inner world. Here all problems are confined to life itself, which is no longer concerned with extraneous matters, but with itself alone. In this inner world, life develops in its own way; it finds its aims and ideals in itself, in its own perfection, in its complete triumph over the antitheses it embraces.

How are we to interpret this new life and its origin? It cannot have proceeded from that nature inferior to man, from which it differs even in its most elementary fundamental forms. It cannot be a creation of man alone, in whom—as experience proves—it is far too weak, too much alloyed with lower and sensual elements, for a new gradation of

life to originate in him. Nothing therefore remains but to recognise in this inward tendency a movement of the universe—a movement in which man is privileged to participate, but which he could never engender from out of his own nature. The recognition of such a movement completely changes the aspect of reality. The universe now seems to embrace two planes, and to be rising—at least as far as humanity is concerned—from one plane to the other. A new light is cast on reality, which ceases to be a collection of separate and non-cohesive elements, and becomes capable of comprehensive operation and of self-concentration. We realise that what at first appeared to be the whole of reality was only its outer aspect, which is supplemented by the new depth revealed to us. It is only the development of these depths that gives life its real significance; values come into existence which lie beyond the natural instinct of self-preservation—such values as the good, the true, and the beautiful.

Let us now see how this order of things strikes and influences man. The new phase of life at first appears—in man—only in a few individual operations, while his life and aspiration are still mainly determined by nature and natural self-preservation. A certain spirituality does indeed appear wherever there is human life, yet only as something subordinate, as an accessory to another kind of life, but without the autonomy necessary to a comprehensive and self-centred whole, which could develop its own specific character. If man is to participate in the movement of the universe and bring the spiritual into full operation in himself, this autonomy of the spiritual life is of paramount importance. It can only develop where a movement reaches man from the universe, embraces him, and determines his further course. But, at the same time, man must recognise and seize this impulse, thus taking possession of this new life. We have seen that what used to be considered of secondary importance, is now of paramount

value. This requires a reversion of the original order of things, a readjustment of the values of life. We have not to realise any new achievement within a given sphere of activity, or to further develop existing conditions; we have to acquire an essentially new life.

The requirements thus formulated lead to a system of ethics. Its fundamental doctrine is man's power to rise by free action to the higher plane of cosmic life, and to develop it with all the strength of his soul. We have shown that the new object of our endeavour is not something unfamiliar that suddenly invades our consciousness. For it is the working within us of some spiritual force, that exalts us above the animal world to the status of human beings. But the spiritual life undergoes an essential change, as soon as it acquires autonomy within us. As long as it was held to be of secondary importance, it was chiefly appreciated as a means towards human ends: spiritual forces were to give us more power over external realities, and

fuller enjoyment of life, but we did not penetrate into the life of the spirit and there find a new world. If we do this in accordance with the transformation of life we have been considering, great results will soon appear. In science and art, as well as in law and morality, our efforts will be accompanied by such strength, devotion, and gladness as we never before experienced. We shall operate with the laws and powers inherent in the things themselves; we shall become indifferent to outer profit and success, and shall find full satisfaction in the manifestation of genuine spiritual life, in spite of the trials and difficulties it may offer. If the spiritual life can thus grow towards perfection, undisturbed by human aims, it will manifest all its values in rich and pure abundance; it will reveal a new world, and will open up a new depth of reality. We thus take possession of a world which exalts us far above all petty human considerations, yet which is not alien and unfamiliar to us, but is essentially our own life and being.

With autonomy, the spiritual life also gains more unity. As at first manifested in human life, it is divided into a variety of separate branches—such as art, science, law, technical knowledge—which lack all inner cohesion and mutual understanding. If the autonomy of the spiritual life reveals a new phase of reality, it must also form a comprehensive whole, of which all the separate provinces are but the various manifestations. They themselves now appear in a new light, and every province must determine its position and significance in the whole, and must submit to the operation of the forces proceeding from the whole. This will give more depth and more soul to the activity in each separate province, while all will seek to come into closer touch and to supplement one another.

All this implies a great task for man. He is an imperfect and unfinished being, full of contradictions. He has to seek and achieve genuine life; he must penetrate from the

sphere of effects to that of their causes; he must recognise the great cosmic movement as a personal concern of his own, and must thus give meaning and value to his life and aspiration.

We have here a matter of vast import. Not only must the new world be recognised and taken possession of by the individual, but a new order of things, valid for all humanity, must be created and triumphantly asserted against an entirely different order of things. Instead of the mere juxtaposition which the world of sense at first presents to us, we must establish inner cohesion in society and history. The efforts of all humanity must supplement the visible world, to which we remain bound, by an invisible one, and must make of this invisible world the chief seat of human life. While time is forever flowing onward, permanent truths and values of life must be found, which can sustain from within all aspiration and endeavour. We human beings must realise a higher life within given natural conditions; and to do this, we have

first to create and establish a new order of things within our own sphere of existence. This transforms our life into a never ending task, but also imparts to it an incomparable greatness. While thus striving forward, the individual must first of all submerge himself in the new world as a whole, until he finds there his true life, his real and higher self. A complete negation of the little *Ego* and emancipation from it are requisite. This does not mean that the individual is to disappear and be absorbed by the infinite. The infinite becomes a living present at this special point, and the individual must take possession of it and assert it. He must also promote the forward movement of life, and must enrich reality by the culture of a spiritual individuality, very different from the one nature has given him. This spiritual individuality can only develop on the basis of the spiritual life, from which it takes its aims and standards; and it must always be in harmony with the movement of the whole.

It is evident that all these factors have laid the foundations for a system of ethics. As we have seen, life as a whole challenges man to a great change, to a decision, an action, but also to unremitting work for the establishment of a new order of things. That which gives us human beings our pre-eminence and constitutes our innermost essence is not to be gained without our own efforts, and pervades our life as a continuous task. We may call the morality arising thence the Ethics of the Spiritual Life, for the centre of life and its ruling motive lie in man's relation to a superior spiritual life, which is at the root of his own being and yet has to be acquired by his own action and effort. Morality represents the principles underlying this great change. Morality grasps the question as a whole. Morality elucidates the fact that all the variety of work is dominated by strife for a spiritual self, a strife which can only be successful if the original situation is reversed.

We must now try to determine more

closely what form these ethics are to take, and whether they are able to overcome the objections which confront every kind of morality.

III

A Defence of the Ethical Principle

III

A DEFENCE OF THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLE

BEFORE we proceed further in the direction indicated, we must see whether our own convictions are capable of overcoming the opposition and impediments to morality, presented by widespread currents of contemporary thought. Were we unable to overcome them, then all further advance would be stamped by inner uncertainty.

The first objection was, that all human action must tend to the preservation and advancement of the performer, so that action apart from self-interest, as required by morality, is impossible. We are told that man cannot be inspired and moved to action by any aim outside his own personality, and that even where this appears to be the case, closer examination reveals some hidden

motive of self-interest. This was the doctrine of Spinoza and is now a widespread conviction. There is undoubtedly some truth in the fundamental idea, but it is by no means certain that this truth is rightly applied. It is true that all endeavour must start from the life and being of a man and reflect back on him. Something absolutely alien would necessarily leave us cold and indifferent; by his action man must in some way grow and gain and assert his own inner self.

But we must ask ourselves whether the natural Ego, to which the opponent of morality binds all human action, represents the whole of man's life, and whether all endeavour is obliged to serve the interests of natural self-preservation. If a man recognises any kind of spiritual activity in its specific working, he will reject such limitation; and the more he sees in the spiritual life a new and independent phase of reality, the more decisively will he declare that a real self is not contained in the natural Ego,

but must first be acquired by means of the spiritual life. In spite of all the subjective force and passion displayed in the self-preservation of the natural Ego, this Ego and its life are without inner significance: it plans and acts, without being absorbed and illuminated by an inner force; it remains alien and dense.

On the spiritual plane, on the other hand, man acquires an individuality, and is able to embrace a whole of reality, into the life of which he submerges himself; and in developing this life, he is able to find full satisfaction and joy. The spiritual life does indeed demand repression, subjection, and even sacrifice of the little Ego; yet the experience of humanity clearly proves that life thereby suffers neither degradation nor disintegration, but rather, that it is thus strengthened and regenerated. Life is certainly not weakened or extinguished in the efforts to gain truth and beauty, in the activity of the scholar and the artist, in social and philanthropic work. By enfranchisement from

the little Ego, life has gained in expansion and strength. Man is conscious of finding his real self and of developing his innermost being in such work, not of promoting ends outside himself. All deeper religions and systems of philosophy have in common this requirement that man should give up his little Ego, and they promise that from this renunciation a new life shall be born, which is of infinitely greater meaning and value than the old life. The movement towards spirituality is not a mere negation, but leads to an assertion founded on the basis of negation. Once man has found the right plane of life, and has acquired a new individuality, the gulf between man and the universe is bridged over. Man can then come into inner relation with reality, and can take possession of the infinite. This is the meaning of Goethe's lines:

> Und so lang du dies nicht hast,
> Dieses "Stirb und Werde!"
> Bist du nur ein trüber Gast
> Auf der dunklen Erde.

(Till thou hearest the behest
Saying: "Death is Birth!"
Thou art but a dreary guest
On the gloomy earth.)

If this is the case, then all spiritual work contributes to the development of a new, real self; then no blame can be attached to morality for advocating the absolute necessity of this change, and for recognising, in all ramifications of work, the one great task of developing a new human individuality. Morality will not thereby weaken and suppress the impulse of life, but will direct it into the right channel and ennoble it. By treating man's task as a harmonious whole—which at the same time forms part of the one great entity—it will act as a stimulus on all the separate provinces of life. The gravity of this ethical task is heightened by the fact, that we must pass through a negative stage in order to reach one of positive affirmation, and that all action which denies or obscures such negation, remains one-sided and imperfect.

Closely allied to this first objection to morality is the second: the assertion of the Determinists that human action is but part of an immutable concatenation, and that the decision of the moment arises, with inevitable necessity, from what is and what has been. This is an old assertion, reaching back to the latter days of antiquity. It has frequently aroused men to passion in the domain of religion. It permeates modern philosophy, and has found classical expression in the doctrine of Spinoza. In our day, it is often confirmed by a more careful study of the universe. Favourable to Determinism is also our modern insight into such forces as heredity and social environment, and our greater knowledge of psychology. Everywhere the single atom appears as the result of some cohesion, of which it at the same time forms part. Closer observation only accentuates such dependence; we can no longer consider a separate atom or moment as something absolutely self-centred, nor can we interpret any action as really taking

place suddenly. There exists, without doubt, more cohesion and more subordination than was formerly believed, or is often accepted even now.

However legitimate these considerations may be, it does not follow that they exhaust all the possibilities offered by reality. If we declare that man is completely absorbed in such concatenation, we must assume what is by no means unassailable: that man is simply part of a given order of things, of a natural mechanism, of a network of causality. Were he in reality no more than this, there would be no possibility of his own decision, no freedom of action, and consequently no morality. This would destroy, not morality alone, but much that its opponents could not well give up. If our life were merely part of a natural mechanism, it would necessarily cease to be our own life; it would be only a process realised in us without our co-operation, and our attitude to it would resemble our attitude to our bodily functions. It is difficult

to see how we could then be made responsible by society, or how we could ourselves feel any responsibility,—how such conceptions as those of good and evil could come into existence and engross our attention. Neither would there be any real present, for if there is no demand for decision, and no room for original action, all action would, with inevitable necessity, grow out of the past, like a flower out of its bud, without our co-operation.

We might be able to endure such determination of our life for all time, if the various movements could easily meet and mingle in our soul, without any complications. But if our life contains great problems, grave conflicts, various and often opposed planes, then we human beings, did we submit passively and unresistingly, would be chained like Prometheus to a pitiless rock. Determinism, if followed to its logical conclusion, is nothing less than inner annihilation of life.

Such recognition necessarily brings us to the question whether the hypothesis held by

the Determinists is unassailable. Do we really appertain absolutely to a given and distinctly limited existence? From the point of view of a new plane of reality manifested by the spiritual life, our reply must be a decided negative. As we have seen, this new phase does not embrace us from the beginning, but must be grasped, appropriated, and developed by us; our own decision and action are here indispensable. Our life must indeed reckon with certain given factors; we must recognise the powerful influence of heredity and environment. Our individuality is determined for us by nature; we cannot in all things remould ourselves as we would wish to do; we are on all sides encompassed by fate. But man is not entirely at the mercy of this fate. The spiritual life which can grow up in him gives him a new, spontaneous source of life; he can originate something new, something entirely his own, and can oppose his own action to fate.

Our life thus becomes a struggle between freedom and fate; and to this struggle it

chiefly owes its expansion and greatness. The idea of development is therefore not applicable to the progression of human life. There is no inevitable sequence on a well established basis and in one definite direction; later results are not simply determined by what has gone before; one thing does not follow another naturally and easily, but various elements meet and clash. Time after time, we are in danger of losing what we seemed to have won; over and over again, we must climb to the summit of life. But this struggle constantly calls forth new powers. We see that there is much more in us than appeared at first sight, or than we ourselves were wont to believe. Great shocks and strong emotions often produce new convictions or set free new forces within us. It is, above all, suffering which rouses and regenerates, which teaches us to see and cultivate the deepest that is in us. What hitherto seemed to constitute our whole being, now proves to be but a single stratum, which it is quite possible to transcend.

The real man is only a part, a section of the possible man. The possibilities dormant in us are an integral part of our being; and these possibilities enable us to attain something higher and greater. On this power of inner growth rests the confidence of those who, while recognising the evils of this life, fight bravely and hopefully on the side of progress. The statesman wishing to raise his people from within, builds on such a capacity for inner growth, and believes in the realisation of new possibilities; so does the educator in his efforts to cultivate and ennoble men's souls. Art and religion are ever at work, in order to discover new possibilities and bring them home to man. Were it not for such new possibilities and the regenerative power of man, his life could retain nothing of its youthful vigour, and would lapse into stagnation and senility. The same would apply to human civilisation: it would drift away from simplicity and truth, and would become more and more artificial.

It is in our own power to maintain our

vitality, and to oppose increasing inner strength to all alien and hostile forces. It is by no means certain that we shall always be victorious; it is one of the tragedies of life that a man's soul is filled with longing for something better, yet is held captive by circumstance, and is finally driven back to that from which he would fain escape. And yet it is this struggle which gives to life its vitality and its greatness; and wherever there is religious conviction, there also dwells the hope that what could not gain full victory in our life, will not be lost before God. To quote Browning:

> What I aspired to be,
> And was not, comforts me. . . .
>
> All instincts immature,
> All purposes unsure, . . .
>
> All I could never be,
> All, men ignored in me:
>
> This, I was worth to God.[1]

If all this helps to prove the autonomy of

[1] From "Rabbi Ben Ezra."

man and his independent power of decision, it does not mean the dissociation of man from all inner cohesion. This freedom only becomes possible by the revelation within him of a new world. There could be no spontaneity of action in single cases, if a world of independent and spontaneous life did not exist and embrace us from within. Thus the individual appertains to the whole, even in the exercise of freedom. That of which he is capable by himself alone, is only his ability to bring his own will into accordance with higher laws. All deep thinkers have seen, in the grasp of the essence of life and the development of its possibilities by means of this individual capacity, not an achievement of man alone, but the manifestation of a higher power, a gift of grace. Life did not seem to them to be so divided between grace and freedom, that one of these factors could only be enriched by what was taken from the other; they considered both to be so indissolubly united, that freedom and the power of inner

growth appeared to them to be the highest sign of grace. The most energetic natures, if possessed of any spirituality, have generally felt themselves to be instruments of a higher power and compelled by an inner necessity. This feeling gave them the strength and self-confidence indispensable for their work. In the case of achievement for the visible world, this higher power was mostly looked upon as a dark fate, which protects man as long as it needs him, and abandons him as soon as he ceases to be useful. But in the case of inner change and regeneration, this fate was superseded by a power of love and mercy, which sustains man even in the midst of the greatest dangers. In religion especially, the consciousness of complete dependence on a superior power has not led to a suspension or restriction of activity. This is clearly proved by such men as St. Paul, St. Augustine, and Calvin. They were not the soulless vessels of a truth committed to them; they grasped, by their own recognition and decision, what seemed

to them to be the truth. Yet in their own consciousness, achievement was of small value compared to what they revered as a gift of grace. "Quid habemus quod non accepimus?" (St. Augustine). "What have we that we have not received?"

Hitherto we have been concerned with refuting widespread objections to the possibility of morality. We must now consider the violent opposition against the appreciation which morality demands—and must demand. It seems impossible for morality to be unquestionably superior to everything else in life, and to demand absolute obedience to its requirements, since it does not fill the whole of life, but must share men's allegiance with other obligations, and must seek some compromise with them. This objection could only be valid, if our whole life were a homogeneous structure,—if one single aim dominated all activity, and achievement in this direction could alone determine the value of our action. But the case is very

different. Even the one fact that two planes unite in our life makes it impossible to apply the same standard to all the variety we encounter. The various values determined by these two planes are too different to be compared with one another. How could we judge sensuous enjoyment and outer success in the same way as we judge values like truth and honour?

Further, morality is not concerned merely with single values appertaining to the higher plane, but with the recognition and appropriation of this higher plane itself: it is a movement from a whole and to a whole. Once the conviction obtains that the spiritual phase of life is something entirely different to nature, the acquisition of it becomes the chief problem of life, and the claim of morality—which upholds the principle of such acquisition—can assert its supremacy over all other claims. Wherever this was contested, the new world revealed by the spiritual life was not fully recognised. The experience of history shows that no artistic

or intellectual achievement could prevent a rapid abatement and deterioration of the spiritual life, if the ethical task was not fully recognised. Morality is like religion: neither can take a secondary or even a co-ordinate place; they must be valued *more* than everything else in life, or else they will inevitably come to mean *less*.

We have now seen that the doubts assailing morality generally proceed from a particular conception of the universe and of man's position in it. This more or less naturalistic conception, in spite of all it claims to be, by no means exhausts the resources of human life. As soon as we recognise the limitations of this conception of life and free ourselves from its tyranny, we are able to acknowledge fully the claims of morality. Nay, more: these claims must then appeal to us as being both legitimate and imperative; and what might at first appear to be unintelligible, will become absolutely clear and certain.

IV

Evolution of the Ethical Principle

IV

EVOLUTION OF THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLE

HAVING removed the obstructions which oppose the development of morality, we can now inquire into the special characteristics of the morality based on the spiritual life. Since morality recognises the principle of the spiritual life, which it absorbs into its own volition and being, therefore the nature of the spiritual life will also determine the nature of morality itself. We have already seen that the life of the spirit constitutes a new world as compared to the life which originally encompasses us in nature and society, and which, though it contains certain processes of a spiritual character, is yet mainly and fundamentally bound to the senses. The spiritual element is here disintegrated into separate manifestations, and

is never free from the alloy of sense. In the new life, the spiritual gains autonomy, becomes a comprehensive whole, and is able to cultivate its own individuality. It reveals a plane of life essentially superior to that of nature. On man devolves the great task of attaining and developing this plane, on which life first acquires self-concentration and inner significance, and becomes real, genuine life.

Let us see how this affects morality. It is not confined to individual provinces of life, but extends over its whole expansion and into every ramification, demanding a change and an uplifting. This refutes a conception of morality which limits it to the relation of man to man, and makes it synonymous with altruism. Morality undoubtedly has much to do in relation to our fellow-men; but does it not also find great tasks in the culture of the soul,—in spiritual work for the world, as expressed in science and art? The quintessence of the Stoical teaching was the development of personality, the pro-

clamation of man's inner autonomy and superiority to the world around him. We can hardly refuse to acknowledge the moral character of this teaching, as also of the Christian teaching, which found expression in men like Augustine, who brought all moral action into immediate connection with God, and derived it from love to Him.

Let us now turn to science and art. We see how, in spite of all inner and outer difficulties, a man like Kant devotes himself in unremitting activity to the lifelong task of finding pure and adequate expression for the perception of truth struggling into consciousness within him. We see how, in the same spirit, an artist scorns all external advantage, and strives only after a pure cultivation and assertion of the creative power within his soul. Must not such fidelity to oneself and to one's own work strike us as being in the highest degree moral? The ethical obligation consequently extends to all ramifications of life. Everywhere we must take possession of the spiritual life for

its own sake, transpose ourselves into its inner movement, and exalt it above all concerns of the individual or even of mankind. Therefore we must not seek the highest aim of our actions in the welfare of society, of the community to which we belong.

The welfare of society is a conception capable of very different interpretations. It may mean the mere subjective well-being of people living together. In that case, a new plane of life is not attained; a social utilitarianism develops, which destroys all inner values, and the sole *aim* of life is to provide the *means* of life. But the condition of society can also be our chief aim because the new plane, with its essentially new values, is best attained through life in the community. Then we do not place ourselves merely in the service of humanity, but we labour for the development of a spiritual world within the life of man. Then humanity as a whole is uplifted, and acknowledges a great task, while social utilitarianism limits life to the human sphere, and takes from it

all possibility of inner uplifting. Utilitarianism is the most dangerous opponent of spiritual productive power, for it degrades to a means what should be valued for its own sake and as the highest aim. Utilitarianism does not change its character by becoming *social* utilitarianism. Inner progress of life is only possible if the spiritual values, as the true, the good, and the beautiful, are striven after and appreciated for their own sake, and not as a means for promoting human welfare,—if creative production is not actuated by any consideration of results, but is an inner necessity of a man's own soul.

We have seen that the attainment of autonomy in the spiritual life implies a reversion of the original order of things, and that the whole of life is thus seen in a new light. It follows that no real morality can be engendered merely by developing existing conditions, or heightening natural forces. Wherever this was attempted, closer investigation will always show the presence of both the lower and the higher

phase, and the consequent weakening of morality. Here Christianity has achieved something of world-wide historical importance: it clearly demonstrated the gulf between all merely natural development and real moral action; it has also shown us that something essentially new appears in morality, something unattainable by merely ennobling nature.

This was not only the case with religion, for the deepest thinkers of all times have seen in morality not a mere intensification, but a complete transformation. Plato made real virtue dependent on aspiration to the world of ideas. He distinguished this virtue from all that men call virtue, though to him it was little more than physical ability. Kant advocated something similar, by forbidding man to base action on inclination alone. He even went so far as to make action against natural inclination a sign of good principle. The requirement thus formulated does not preclude fruitful moral germs and impulses in the existing order of things; but their full

development is only possible when a distinct reversion has taken place, and when an independent spiritual life purifies, unites, and exalts all beginnings. These alone can never, by a slow process of evolution, raise life to the plane of genuine spirituality. As we have seen, the morality of the spiritual life rejects a merely natural origin. But because it represents something essentially new, its main object cannot consist in the denial and suppression of mere nature. This was the aim of asceticism, especially in its development as a reaction against the antique over-estimation of nature. In the latter days of antiquity, life was swamped and enfeebled by a refined form of sensuality. Life could only develop if this sensuality was resisted and full supremacy was advocated for the spiritual. We can understand that those engaged in this struggle went so far as to see the highest morality in the complete suppression of sensual life. This bears witness to admirable personal feeling; and yet it was a dangerous error,

for it diverted men from the great task of giving inner significance to life, and of filling it with strong and healthy love. The strictest asceticism can be united to inner hollowness, to spiritual pride, and to want of love. An ascetic element is inseparable from all morality, but only an element subject to higher aims. We feel it to have been one of the great merits of the Reformation, that it set aside the mediæval appreciation of asceticism.

If it is true that autonomy of the spiritual life results in progression towards a new plane, then only such forms of morality can satisfy us as fully acknowledge such progression and the consequent affirmation of life,—as establish the value of man, and stimulate him to strenuous effort. All systems which base morality on pity alone must therefore appear inadequate. Pity does much to free man from narrow egoism, and to inspire him with sympathy for others, even for all mankind; but pity alone shows only one side of life—only limitations and difficulties,

suffering and gloom. It restricts man's outlook to this one side of life, so that he can acquire neither glad courage nor any impulse tending to the uplifting of his existence. Pity reveals no new possibilities as love does it; complete resignation here forms the highest pinnacle of the philosophy of life and not the creating of a new world.

Neither can a system of morality satisfy us which only draws up laws and regulations,—which indicates definite channels of action, without vitalising action or giving it any progressive impulse. This might suffice if man only had to take his place in a given order of things. But it is quite inadequate if the whole soul is to be gained for a new plane, and if a new order of things is to be built up within the human sphere. There is, besides, the danger of interpreting morality above all as a narrowing, a police system of life, and of thus forfeiting man's sympathy. We do not deny that the uplifting, inseparable from spiritual life, demands many struggles and renunciations. We can only

rise to an affirmative by means of a decided negation—a negation rendered necessary by the brutality of mere nature and the pettiness of mere man. In the history of mankind, morality at first operated chiefly through prohibition: it was necessary to restrain the wild natural impulses and destructive passions of man, in order to prepare the way for spiritual activity. We have but to think of the frequent recurrence of prohibitive laws in the older legislation of all nations. But there is a great distinction, even in this primitive form of morality. The lower kind may remain permanently on the grade of negation, while higher forms will work their way through the negation to affirmation, and will retain consciousness of this affirmation even in presence of negation. Morality must consequently be productive in character, not merely regulative. Productive morality will press forward, not waiting till man is brought face to face with a new requirement or an opportunity of action, but taking the

initiative, seeking new points of attack, bringing everything into movement, and promoting the growth of the spiritual life.

Even then, morality cannot limit its task to the ordering of private life, but must extend its activity to general conditions and human society. Life in the community must be exalted, and fitted to become the representative of spiritual life. It is one of the chief demands of modern times, that not only private life, but the whole of human society, should be subject to moral judgment and moral operation. Hegel condemned as "paltriness of faith," (Kleinkrämerei des Glaubens) men's belief in the guidance of their personal destiny by divine might and wisdom, while at the same time they believed the fate of mankind, as manifested in the history of the world, to be governed by blind unreasonable chance. We must also combat a paltriness of morality which concerns itself with the private affairs of individuals, but shows no interest and recognises no obligation with regard to what concerns

humanity at large. In former times, when man was conscious of his weakness with regard to his environment, the most hopeless situation could be accepted as the will of God or as a decree of fate. But the modern man, with his consciousness of power and of his obligations towards the community, cannot reject the idea of the moral solidarity of all. He must therefore concern himself with the general conditions of mankind, and must display active interest in this direction.

Let us further consider what has been achieved by the autonomy of the spiritual life. We must first of all return to the new depth of life which we have already recognised as one of its most important results. This means that we must cultivate in ourselves a firm basis, a continuous activity which determines, vitalises, and permeates each individual action. We must develop a distinct nucleus, an essential character which is not a mere background to our activity, but an integral part

of it. This being the case, morality cannot be satisfied with stimulating man to certain achievements, and setting free the forces within him; it demands of him a new life, in which he must strive to make the deepening of activity we have been considering, an essential part of all his action. This is the ideal we try to realise in the development of personality and moral character. We want not merely to *act* but to *be* something, to make something out of ourselves, to put our own personal self into our action, and to so act that we ourselves thereby grow and advance. Only then life is so concentrated on itself and becomes self-conscious and self-centred—only then can it gain significance; it will otherwise be empty and hollow inwardly, in spite of unremitting activity. This is what justifies the estimation in which the ideas of personality and character are held. Why indeed should we value it so highly, were it but an accumulation of natural forces and impulses, and not the representative and starting-point of a new life?

Not only in individuals must such a depth of being, such a spiritual individuality be developed; but in every community, in every nation, in all mankind. Everywhere must a spiritual character be formed, and this spiritual character must inspire and permeate all action. Only thus can a spiritual atmosphere be created,—can a really civilised nation be differentiated from other nations; only thus, and not by means of outer victories and conquests, can any nation gain lasting significance for all humanity. So, for instance, Greek culture is a possession forever.

In all this, it is evident that in striving for morality, we are not seeking something alien, but rather our own essential being. Yet this being does not already exist in us, but has first to be acquired; it lies not behind us, but in front of us; we cannot take for granted a firm basis and positive continuity, which we see before us as high tasks and ideals. From the imperfect and incomplete life we generally lead, we must resolutely

advance towards real and genuine life. While striving after morality, we are at the same time battling for our own spiritual self; we cannot but feel morality as a living inner presence, a source of strength and of joyous impulse to action. Thus understood, morality needs no reward from without; indeed, it sustains grave injury, if action is dominated by the thought of reward. For then the autonomy and independence which are above all aimed at, must be given up; and we force under an alien yoke that life which should be based on itself alone.

Such accentuation of autonomy in life and morality, might seem to exalt man unduly, and to inspire him with self-conscious pride. But we have already guarded ourselves against such misapprehension. We have seen that every undertaking possible to the individual lies within a sustaining and impelling movement of the whole. The recognition of morality is therefore not a matter of personal option or caprice. The life of the whole operates in the individual;

but, on the other hand, his decision influences the whole of reality in the direction of progress or retrogression. In this way the conception of duty arises, in which the whole of life, the whole of the cosmic movement formulates a claim on us. Kant rightly pointed out that duty cannot come to us from without, but must proceed from our own being. This can only be the case if our being experiences an inner gradation. A spiritual world speaks within us, not as something alien, but in union with our own innermost being, as the depth of our own soul. The idea of duty is necessary in proportion to the consciousness and recognition of the difference between man as he is, and the inner world which corresponds to his innermost being. Wherever this consciousness grows dim, there morality speedily experiences an inner weakening. Duty is the salt of life. Where it is lacking, life, however brilliant externally, becomes inwardly tame and insipid, while on the other hand, duty can impart inner greatness and dignity to

what appears small and insignificant. But as we do not wish the presence of salt to be everywhere perceptible, so also the idea of duty must not always force itself on our consciousness, but must be a latent power in our soul and life, lifting us above all that is arbitrary and capricious. We must take duty up into our inner being, and not place it there as something alien or hostile. Moral life can quite well unite earnestness and joy, reverence and love—earnestness and reverence towards the superior majesty of a higher power operative to us, joy and love arising from the mighty presence of this higher power within us.

Thus constituted, morality can fully acknowledge the various moral impulses at work in the present day; it can, at the same time, oppose their disintegration, and help them as far as possible to promote each others best interests. We have seen how, in our day, invisible and visible impulses are in operation, which easily come into

mutual opposition. The morality of the spiritual life can in such cases acknowledge both aspects, even if it cannot value them equally. For this morality must take up a position in an invisible world, since the progression from a visible to an invisible world goes through the whole of the spiritual life. At the same time work in the visible world is most important for man, if not indispensable. He is driven to it not only by the necessity of natural self-preservation, but also by the real interests of the invisible world. He does not find this invisible world ready for him, or waiting to develop steadily from within, but he must acquire and strengthen it by battling against the visible world and its resistance. The spiritual movement is sure to become subjective and uncertain, as soon as it severs all connection with the visible world, in relation to which our work gains strength and confidence. Love, strength, and continuity are thus acquired, which must then be transformed into activity for our fellow-men.

This applies both to individuals and to all mankind. Such valuation of activity for the visible world does not mean that we constitute life out of the visible and the invisible as out of two factors of equal value, for wherever spiritual life develops, the invisible is of paramount importance, and everything else must be brought into relation with it. The visible is valuable only as a means for the development or manifestation of the invisible. But as such, it is of considerable value. Thus the morality of the spiritual life is quite able to recognise—and to benefit by—the great civilising work of the modern age and its untiring social activity, even while insisting on their assimilation by a vaster cohesion which is to vitalise them.

We shall see, later on, that the invisible world cannot hold its own against doubts and obstacles, unless it is aided by religion. But although the morality of the spiritual life must seek to be in close touch with religion, it must do its best to counteract the

dangers arising from an exclusively religious system of ethics. Religious morality in former times often directed man's endeavour too much towards a world of faith and hope beyond our world, and was inclined to neglect earthly matters as being of secondary importance. It often transferred to human affairs the humility and pliability born of its relation to God; and it consequently lacked strength and vigour when dealing with the evils of human life. These perils can be counteracted by a morality of the spiritual life, which sees the operation of the Divine Being above all in man, even while acknowledging its superiority to man. Such morality will urge man to seek and appropriate eternal values, not only in a future state, but in this our earthly life. Such morality will teach man not to accept the unreasonable conditions as he finds them, but to struggle against them with all his might, striving to impart reality to the reasonable and reason to reality.

The morality of reason and immanent

idealism contains a virile strength and educational power that the morality of the spiritual life is bound to acknowledge. Yet spiritual morality must counteract certain undesirable results frequently brought about by mere rational morality, which is prone to overrate intellect and abstract ideas, to overvalue the strength of the individual, and thus to encourage undue pride and self-consciousness.

Thus great tasks are evident in all directions. From the standpoint of the spiritual life it is possible to take them up hopefully, and to counteract antitheses which would otherwise disintegrate human life. In all these tasks, taken together, we see how life may be quickened and strengthened by the ethics of the spiritual life. Everywhere it is necessary to proceed beyond a given order of things,—to rise above merely human aims and conditions,—to develop the consciousness of a marvellous depth of reality, in which man is privileged

to participate. We discover a great cosmic movement, and we see our own greatness in our co-operation in this movement, by which we contribute something to the growth of the spiritual world. To speak with Leibnitz: "Man is not a part, but an image of the divine, a presentation of the universe, a denizen of the City of God."

V

Morality and Religion

V

MORALITY AND RELIGION

WE have hitherto confined ourselves to the inner development of morality, without considering the attitude of the world around us and within us to those claims which morality, from its very nature, is bound to assert. At all times, this question has presented grave complications, which are magnified rather than diminished by the philosophy of the spiritual life.

If morality is the first condition and an essential factor of all independent spiritual life,—if this spiritual life is the central point of reality, and dominates all its manifestations: then we might expect to see, throughout the visible world, the triumph of good, the repression of evil, and the rule of a moral order of things, moulding reality to

its requirements. Man's desire for such an order of things does not rise from petty motives, but from an imperative desire for the unquestioned supremacy of the good: what is in itself of such absolute value, must be strong enough to enforce its dominion over reality, otherwise it might come to be considered merely as a subjective illusion.

The world, as we see it, does not come up to this requirement. It evinces—as every impartial observer must acknowledge—absolute indifference, not only to the weal and woe of man, but also to his moral conduct. How often, in the destiny of nations as of individuals, does good succumb and evil triumph! It may be that we often judge too exclusively from external impressions, and that there is more justice in the world than appears at first sight. But this is no more than a possibility, and we cannot assert that it is in any way realised. Much remains dark, and has not been explained away, in spite of the efforts made by religion and philosophy during thousands of years.

These efforts have made the darkness less evident, but have not brought light into it. We can deny neither the indifference of nature to our moral action, nor the incapacity of man to enforce, in his own sphere, the triumph and supremacy of the moral idea. And this gulf between what we must demand and what we find in the world, receives further accentuation by the recognition of an independent spiritual life closely allied to morality. For the impotence of morality now appears as the impotence of the whole spiritual life. At the same time, the human sphere seems to lose all its own special significance, since it cannot enforce universal recognition of the power to which it owes its privileged position.

Distressing as is this contradiction between the inner requirement and external experience, it does not necessarily lead to a weakening of the moral obligation. This is plainly shown by religion, more especially by early Christianity. The early Christians were fully conscious of the sorrow and gloom of

human life; they realised the unreasonableness of the world we live in, quite as fully as the pessimists of our day. Yet their faith and courage remained unshaken. The contradiction of experience only intensified their inner conviction, and gave it an almost defiant superiority. This was only possible, because the possession of a new life and the certainity of a new world made it easy to bear all the contradictions in the existing order of things. From their certainty of a new world, arose the conviction that the good could only be impotent in a certain phase and for a certain time. The early Christians were so sure of the ultimate triumph of good, that they found strength to persevere in the battle of life.

The present time lacks this joyous certainty of a higher world and a new life. Therefore the contradiction between the course of the world and the requirements of morality, is felt in all its rigour, and doubt is intensified by the unsatisfactory moral condition of human life, by the inner weakness

of morality in our day. Single individuals are not without good intentions, but they lack the power of achievement. Spiritual activity is generally treated as of secondary importance; infinitely greater value is attached to the natural self-preservation of individuals and of society. Life in the community ought to give greater prominence to moral claims, and be governed as far as possible by moral law. But on the one hand there is not enough power of volition, and on the other hand there is, here also, a wide gulf between volition and achievement. Social life also displays so much self-interest, selfishness, and passion, so much unreality and hypocrisy, that morality cannot reach any adequate development. The spiritual powers which should raise man to a higher plane are mostly withdrawn into the service of the lower plane, and life is thus diverted into wrong channels. This contradiction between human conditions and the requirements of morality has been expressed in various ways by the great

thinkers. Plato lamented, above all, the evanescence and unreality of everyday life; Augustine the overweening conceit of man; Kant the insincerity and injustice everywhere apparent. But to one and all, the moral condition of mankind appeared most unsatisfactory.

All these contradictions, obstructions, and distortions are so deep-rooted, that we can hardly expect any essential progress to result from a gradual amelioration. In other directions—such as science and technical knowledge—humanity may make steady progress; but it is not so easy to prove that humanity will also experience moral improvement. The progress of civilisation brings with it the development of much that is good, but also of much that is evil, for civilisation develops great power, without providing for its moral guidance. History shows us how mankind has always seemed to alternate between periods of moral growth and periods of moral decay; but it is doubtful whether, on the whole, much has been gained.

How often have the nations longed to return to simpler and more innocent beginnings!

All these impressions might seem to prove that morality has no power in the life of man. A doubt easily arises as to whether, if morality is so powerless, we ought to acknowledge it as the guide of our life, or whether we should not rather expel it as a mere illusion. But the experience of history shows us unmistakably that the roots of morality lie deeper, and are not so easily removed. Even if morality is not the ruling power, it is unquestionably efficacious as man's lawgiver and judge. Again and again, the nations may resist the claims of morality, and the conceptions of morality itself may be widely divergent; yet wherever human life develops, moral judgment develops with it. Certain actions are highly esteemed, others are decidedly condemned. Something operates in man which is not confined to his own interest, and which forces him to judge his actions. Such judgment must inevitably

influence both the action and the spiritual condition of man; in one direction it promotes, in another it represses.

History gives us an indirect proof of the power of morality over man. There are times in the history of mankind when the moral idea, with its decree of duty, recedes into the background, and is even scoffed at as an irksome instrument of control. But such times, however brilliant on the surface, cannot resist inner decay and hollowness, till at last they become unendurable. Then, if there is a return to morality, it is superior to, and triumphant over all other interests. It was moral earnestness and moral strength that were above all instrumental in causing early Christianity to overcome the pagan world that was, in all outer respects, superior and more powerful. It was moral energy that gave the Reformation its power to advance and conquer, while the soft and beautiful Renaissance perished because it lacked morality. Look where we will, we see that the moral task, if fully and

clearly grasped, is stronger than anything else.

It is therefore impossible for mankind to renounce morality. But we have seen that morality, as a rule, has little power over external life or man's soul, and is forced into a subordinate position. This produces inner discord in human life. Man acquires inner insincerity by not recognising and developing the depths of his own being. This inner contradiction can be fully appreciated by a system of philosophy which attaches special importance to the idea of the spiritual life. For in the light of such philosophy, we see one great contradiction pervading the whole of life: the spiritual activity—which ought to lead man to an independent inner life, thus making his existence one of joyous creative work—is used by average life as a mere means and instrument for human ends. Spiritual activity is thus degraded, for the good has mostly to give way to utilitarian considerations. This is the case, when the motive of scientific research is its utility,

and not a desire for truth. This is the case, when art does not reveal a new world to man by means of genuine beauty, but appeals only to his senses. This is the case, whenever the subjective welfare of man—either of the individual or of society—is the highest aim, —whenever man is not led to a higher life by spiritual activity, but is only confirmed by it in the lower life.

Such conflicts, such inner discord, such stagnation of life impel morality to seek close contact with religion. We see that man has in himself an ideal, on which depends all the greatness and dignity of his life; but he cannot reach it unaided. Something strives to assert itself within him, without his being able to accomplish it. He remains chained to a lower level, above which his innermost soul longs to rise. Doubt and uncertainty proceed from the fact that what is of the very highest inner value should have so little power in the world and in the sphere of human life. For deep and earnest natures as St. Augustine and as Luther, such uncertainty has often

become unbearable; from inner conflicts was born the sure and triumphant conviction of a higher power in the movement towards morality,—a power which not only imposes moral obligations on man, but which, by the revelation of a new life, gives him strength to fulfil them. Morality here appears as something infinitely superior to the uncertainty of human conditions, and completely independent of man's attitude towards it. If morality does not attain the power due to it in man's life, this is now attributed to the weakness, not of morality, but of man. The majesty of morality is by no means prejudiced by man's line of conduct. Kant could therefore declare that "it is most reprehensible to derive either the origin or any restriction of the laws telling me what I should do, from that which is done by others."

It is the essence of all deep religions, especially of Christianity, that a new life is created in man by a revelation of the Divine by means of a direct union of the

soul with God. This new life is held to be superior to the complexity of existing conditions, and is sure to triumph, because it is founded in God. A source of life is thus opened up, which imparts new activity to the life hitherto stagnant. Man regains courage and confidence, because he feels himself sustained by divine strength and love. No contradiction in the world of external realities is now able to weaken man's inner certainty. A powerful impulse towards work and creative activity will be born of the gladness within him. This explains the unquestioning confidence and joyous energy manifested by all the leaders of religious life; the consciousness of their deliverance from dire distress filled them with unbounded gratitude, which sought expression in unremitting work for their fellow-men. Luther says: "From faith flow love and joy in the Lord, and from love a free and joyous spirit of voluntary service of our neighbour, quite irrespective of gratitude or ingratitude, praise or blame, gain or loss."

Further development of life by means of religion is sure to stamp morality with characteristic features. The consciousness of deliverance by a higher power will arouse not only gratitude, but humility and child-like confidence. If everything man has is but a gift, then he will see, in his highest achievement, less his own work than that of God. Gentleness and toleration will gain ground; arrogance and harshness will disappear; all decisive action will have an inner rather than an outer significance. The value of an action depends on loyalty to principle, and not on the greatness of what is achieved. This is shown by Jesus in the parable of the talents.

But this accentuation of softer elements and inner values by no means paralyses activity. For the new life must be energetically developed and bravely asserted against an alien, not to say a hostile, world. Man finds a great task, first of all in his own soul, but then in the whole of his life with other men. We may here apply a principle of

the Reformation, which has thus been expressed: "The word of God comes to change and renew the world, whenever it comes." There is one thing on which a philosophy of the spiritual life must emphatically insist: this return to religion must not be confined to the individual, but must embrace all the conditions of human life. Only thus can the whole of man be won. This can only be done by creating a specific religious sphere of life, a specific religious community. Many of us may wish the Church to be, in certain respects, different to what it is; but that should not make us ignore the necessity of a religious community. It is indispensable, if we are to establish the new life in the human sphere, and bring it within the reach of the individual; it is indispensable, if the struggle is to be maintained by great entities, and is not to degenerate into small skirmishes. At the present time, when the state is engrossed by economic and other constantly changing problems of the day, we need a community which

attaches paramount importance to the inner problems of humanity and which directs our life towards eternal aims and values.

In this union with religion, morality will be inclined to see more gloom than light in the life around us. For morality will then judge by higher standards, and will emphasise the insufficiency of human achievement, the unsatisfactory character of the present situation. But morality cannot lead to despondency, once it is emancipated from the world of immediate environment, and has gained a new world. Morality will then see, in the world of strife and antithesis, only a special kind of reality, and not the whole of reality; it will recognise in this world only one act of a great drama, and not the whole drama.

Much that is dark thus remains unexplained. To speak with Goethe, we "walk among mysteries." Even if we cannot enlighten what is dark, the new beginnings established in us will save us from becoming cowed and despondent. We are certain

that great things are being accomplished in us and through us,—that a higher power is present within us throughout the struggles of our life. At the same time, we feel sure that our inner renewal is not mechanical, but requires our own decision and action, thus making us co-operate in the movement of the universe, and giving to our activity a significance for the whole. That must and that can be sufficient for us. We can agree with Luther, when he thus characterises human life: "It is not yet done and accomplished, but it is in working order and in full swing; it is not the end, but the way. All does not yet glow and shine, but all is being burnished."

We know that so close a connection between morality and religion is often contested nowadays. But we believe that religious morality can only be attacked by those who have too low an estimate of morality or too high an estimate of the actual condition of humanity. If morality is but a means of tolerable order in the social community of

life, and is only looked upon as a controlling force, then it can dispense with religion. But this means a lowering of the moral requirement, the fulfilment of which brings but little gain or profit. It is possible, on the other hand, to value morality more highly, but to over-estimate man, as experience shows him to be. He is looked on as a good and noble being, easily won for the highest aims. Were this a true conception of man, then morality could attain its ends by its own strength alone. But we are clearly shown that this is not the case, both by the conviction of all great religious and philosophical teachers, and by the general impression of human life. At all times, the pessimists—and not the optimists—were held to have the best knowledge of human nature. We need only consider more closely the delineation of human life left us by the so-called optimistic philosophers (like Aristotle and Leibnitz), in order to see that even they found in it much that was dark and gloomy.

If we maintain a high conception of the moral task and an impartial conception of the actual condition of human life, there remains but one dilemma: either complete hopelessness and inner collapse of life, or the acquisition of further cohesions, such as that offered by an alliance with religion. But religion must then mean more than a sum of doctrines and institutions. It must influence the whole soul. It must not only cling to the past, but must, above all, be a power in the living present. It must not only be a source of comfort to individuals, but must raise the whole of mankind to a higher and purer level. In all these aspects, religion is both action and life, not mere thinking about the world, or subjective emotion. A connection of morality with religion thus understood, can be only a source of profit—not of loss—to morality, which will thus be strengthened in its bearing on external reality, and will experience a great deepening of its inner life.

VI

The Present Status of Morality

VI

THE PRESENT STATUS OF MORALITY

WE must now consider, in conclusion, the position of Morality in our day. Let us see what profit and loss accrues to morality from the present, and what its prospects are for the future. There can be no doubt about the fact that great changes are being effected—changes not only in the world of thought, but in the whole range of life and work. These changes at first result in manifold losses to morality. The pillars which used to support it began to totter, or gave way altogether; new ones arose, but are as yet too weak to offer an adequate substitute for what is lost. We cannot therefore look upon the present status of morality as a satisfactory one.

The weakening of religious conviction

and practice is unfavourable to morality. Imperfect as the influence of religion often was on mankind at large, and excessive as was the importance attached to the idea of reward and punishment, men yet recognised a power superior to all human action and all arbitrary human decision. This power was to be an object of reverence; and life was raised above the care for purely material possessions. It was also a gain for moral culture, that religion established the inner solidarity of man, and facilitated mutual understanding. Thus it is a loss for morality, that religion no longer maintains its former ruling position.

The general condition of our intellectual life is unfavourable to morality, inasmuch as this intellectual life lacks a uniform aim which could unite scattered aspirations, strengthen every single undertaking, and counteract, as a whole, the interests of mere individuals. These interests at all times made themselves felt, and life was always in danger of being dominated by petty human

considerations. But the difference between period and period depends on whether or not this danger is counteracted and man is raised above himself by some high aim. In our day, such counteraction is lacking. Where have we an aim embracing the whole man, which is common to us all and binds us together to inner communion? Every party and faction preaches some ideal of its own, the attainment of which will, it believes, unite men, making them good and happy. But these individual aims are very different in character; they are a cause of mutual hindrance, and they divide mankind in that which should be a means of union.

Another disadvantage for inner culture is the rapid pace of life, as compared to former times. While we are hastening from moment to moment, we have neither repose nor leisure for the culture of our inner man, for the development of a character, a personality. We are more and more in danger of being absorbed by the whirlpool of life, and robbed of all possibility of self-conscious

action. Other perils also beset us. In our thirst for achievement and success, our moral judgment is often repressed; the accentuation of the battle of life can even make us indifferent to the moral quality of the ways and means employed by us. All this necessarily weakens morality, and makes it appear unimportant and shadowy.

To these dangers arising from the general conduct of life, we must add others, which originate in the modern development of work in the community. In former times, the conditions of life were at once narrower and less subject to change. Social environment exercised a stricter and more exclusive control over the individual, holding him within the bounds of law and custom. This influence was often only an external one; correct behaviour was frequently mistaken for moral integrity. This gave rise to much unreality and pharisaical hypocrisy. Still, a certain result was attained in the direction of moral culture; certain restraints were acknowledged, which cannot, without

impunity, be dispensed with. Restraints play an important part in the life of the soul, as well as in that of the body. Modern freedom of action makes the individual depend on himself alone, and we must be very optimistic to believe him able to completely withstand, unaided, all the temptations of life.

We cannot omit one characteristic modern development: the change of men's mutual relation from a personal to an impersonal one. We have but to think of the difference between the cordial community of life established by the old arts and crafts, and the cool, almost hostile manner in which, in our great labour complexes, "employers" and "employees" nowadays associate. There is no longer the slightest personal relation or personal sympathy between them.

If we survey all these losses, the balance of the day will hardly appear to be in favour of morality. But we must not forget that the present age has also supplied morality

with new and valuable impulses. This is above all the case with labour—the modern form of work to which we have just alluded. There is a strong moral element in the ever increasing formation and organisation of great labour complexes, not only in the factory, but also in science, state organisation, education, and so forth. The individual is thereby obliged to work in close union with others, and in accordance with objective requirements. He must adapt his own activity to the general character of the work; and yet he must do his own part conscientiously, so that the mass of separate achievements may blend harmoniously and ensure the steady progress of the whole. This requires such loyalty, self-control, and sacrifice of personal taste and opinion, that a strong moral effect is undeniable. In this respect, man now learns more implicit obedience than at any former period. Another moral element in modern labour is the concentration of man's whole strength on his work, to the exclusion of all inert repose.

If the impersonal element predominates in work, the social side of modern life offers, on the other hand, more direct union and more reciprocal action between man and man. This was, at first, mainly theoretical. It was pointed out how much one man depends on his fellow-men. People realised that the individual develops with other individuals and as part of the community, with which his aspirations are indissolubly connected, even when he imagines he is striking out a path for himself. But such theories could only have so much influence, because they were in harmony with the realities of life. Modern life, with its technical developments, brought individuals into close touch and created new opportunities of mutual intercourse, uniting men both in success and in failure. Thus grew up the consciousness of human solidarity, the recognition of men's interdependence, the idea of mutual obligation. The result is a wealth of humane activity, which penetrates into all the ramifications of life, attacking and

seeking to eradicate all forms of want and misery, instead of merely helping to relieve individual cases. We encounter the earnest endeavour to impart material and spiritual possessions, as far as possible, to all men; to help and strengthen the less favoured section of humanity; to further the interests of aspiring spirits. These efforts are but various aspects of one great duty, which we feel we cannot ignore; we can no longer look upon them as works of mercy, which it is a virtue to perform. This is at the root of the social idea. And this social idea is, in our day, the greatest bond of union between human beings; not only does it stir individuals,but it also exercises a strong influence on law, education, and so forth. In this respect our time has a right to claim undoubted superiority over all former times.

These moral achievements of the present, valuable as they are, yet have their inner limitations. Nearly all movement here proceeds outward, and is directed towards distinct single achievements, while the culture

and welfare of the inner man are mostly treated as of secondary importance. Zeal for surface ends leads to the neglect of the central values of life. Yet all outer achievement only means real gain for us, if it promotes the growth of the whole man, of his soul, of his personality, making him nobler, greater, and happier. If there is no development and strengthening of the centre of life, achievement on the surface is apt to result in grave complications, and all that is great in the present may thereby be driven into the wrong channels. Another danger grows out of the ever increasing tendency to organise work. Owing to the necessity of specialising and differentiating, the amount of work is restricted which the individual can comprehend and master. He is tempted to concentrate his interest on his own little province, to be indifferent to everything outside it, and to lose all consciousness of a leading idea and of a great whole. He thus falls a prey to the narrow conceit of the specialist, and finally pushes aside as worth-

less accessories all matters of general interest, all the questions and sorrows of humanity at large.

By furthering a spirit of pity for human want and misery, without giving to life an inner value and a higher aim, we are in danger of becoming sentimental and of producing inner languor in spite of all outer activity. We are often more anxious to procure for man a comfortable and pleasant life, than to promote inner growth; and our care for the weak, which is quite justified, leads us to take such weak individuals as a criterion and to lower life to their level.

Modern life often lacks the necessary hardness and vigour; in our care for the rights of individuals, we are inclined to neglect the rights and requirements of the whole and also of the spiritual life. So we are in danger of losing that which according to Goethe, "No one brings with him into the world, yet which is all important if a man is to become a man in every respect: reverence."

If we review the whole and consider the balance of moral profit and loss in our day, the result cannot be a favourable one. No full substitute is offered for what is lost. We have gained in breadth, but we have lost in depth and strength. Above all, morality is in danger of losing its former ruling position, and of having a subordinate one assigned to it. It can therefore no longer call forth reverence, or be treated as an independent aim and ideal. We realise at once the gravity of this loss.

But this unfavourable aspect only holds good, if we consider the present time as something complete and incapable of further development. If, on the contrary, we seek to grasp all that is struggling into life, all the requirements of our time that yet await fulfilment: then the situation is quite different and far more favourable. What mainly told against morality was the prevalent over-estimation of everything pertaining to the visible life which surrounds us in nature and in human society. The invisible

realms of religion and the ideal have, as we have seen, often grown dim and shadowy. Many of our contemporaries deny them altogether, and look to the visible world for full satisfaction of all man's wants, even of his spiritual and intellectual requirements. This could only appear possible because, in reality, the invisible world of spiritual values continued to influence even those who denied it, and because it supplemented and completed the achievements of the visible world. It is, however, characteristic of our time, that the old fusion is no longer possible, and the irreconcilable antithesis between these two conceptions of life stands out in bold relief. With increasing zeal, the movement in favour of the visible world—that is to say, Naturalism—tries to eradicate everything appertaining to the invisible world, and to fashion the whole of life in accordance with its own principles. Naturalism tolerates no rival, and declares war to the death to Idealism.

We now see the truth of Bacon's words: "*Veritas potius emergit ex errore quam ex*

confusione" (Truth can more easily emerge from error than from confusion). For if we accept naturalism as the only valid conception of life, and develop it consistently in all its bearings, we cannot but see its incapacity to embrace the whole of life. The apparent victory of naturalism thus contains the germ of a defeat, the beginning of a great reaction. What becomes of man and of human life, if the visible world means to him the only form of reality? He is then but part of nature—dark and soulless nature. The vast expansion and range of nature overwhelms him with the consciousness of his own insignificance, while, at the same time, nature is absolutely indifferent to his wishes and aspirations. What he makes of himself and his life has not the very slightest significance for this world of nature. All aspiration which transcends his natural instinct of self-preservation must appear to be mere folly. Such ideals as personality and character are but held to be illusions.

If man turns away from the outer world

and takes refuge in his own sphere, in the social life among his fellows, naturalism there shows him a mere juxtaposition, but no inner community which could offer new aims or develop new values. What remains is only a number of individuals inhabiting the same little corner of the universe. Each of these individuals strives to gain recognition of his own merits, and to assert himself, to the detriment of others. Much sordidness and hypocrisy become rampant, and it is impossible to counteract them within so narrow a range, or to hope for the growing up of a nobler and purer race of men. The individual remains bound to the condition of society, which also determines his own nature; he appears to be but a product of the social environment. Having no deeper source of life within himself, how should he be able to escape from the trammels of society, to rise above it or oppose it? Society and environment thus become the destiny of man; and there is no scope for freedom, for initiative, for independent action.

If we survey and appreciate all this with unbiassed minds, this life must appear empty and meaningless and scarcely worth living. At the same time, we shall discern a development of mankind far transcending these narrow limits, as indeed has already been pointed out in this our study of morality. The degradation of life effected by naturalism might be endured in feeble and senile periods conscious of no great tasks, but not in our time, which teems with stupendous tasks it is earnestly striving to carry out. These great tasks and problems can only be grappled with, if we are fully conscious of concentrated energy and increased spiritual power. Modern life has developed in various and opposite directions. Its expansion is greater than its concentration, and this threatens it with disintegration. There is an increasing and imperative need of more unity and cohesion, of some universal and harmonious character of the whole. How should this be attained without a vigorous deepening of life, without the development of invisible

values? We observe, in our day, the encounter of an older and a newer age, of a conception of life hallowed by the traditions of history, and a new one that is struggling into existence; there is a sharp conflict between the past and the present. We cannot but admit in the old an imperishable germ of truth, and in the new, an inalienable right to impress and influence us. We must prove and sift, separate and unite. But how were any progress in this direction possible, could we not find a superior point of view, such as can be offered only by a world of thought, not by the visible life? This problem gains vastly in significance by extending to the social life of all humanity. We see here a struggle between an older, more aristocratic form of society, and a newer, more democratic one. This struggle engenders violent passions, especially in the province of economics. We are here placed before a grave question: shall we be able to impart the benefits of civilisation to all men alike, and thus broaden every in-

dividual soul, without injury to its inner depths?

These are problems which do not originate in ourselves, but which are forced upon us by the movement of history. Their very necessity bids us hope for progression, in spite of all impediments. The power which has imposed these problems on us will enable us to solve them. But we shall also need to put forth our uttermost strength, and to quicken all our latent spiritual forces; we must grasp our life as a whole, must acknowledge its high aims with all our heart and soul, and must find our real self in these ideals. Only thus can we gain the sense of inner necessity which alone can lead us onward.

In this manner, our aspiration becomes closely linked to morality. Let us see wherein we have already recognised the quintessence of morality. Life and aspiration are detached from the little Ego, and take root in a spiritual world in which we find our own essential being, so that while working for

this spiritual world, we are at the same time working for our own depth and spiritual self-preservation. Such a change and reaction, such identification with the movement of the spiritual life, means only that our aspiration has gained a moral character. This moral character brings us, at all points, into touch with our time. By means of our own aspiration, we can now grasp, unite, and deepen all the goodwill, genuine feeling, and untiring activity of our day, which was hitherto inadequate only because it lacked inner unity and quickening spiritual power.

We can thus face the future with courage and confidence. Humanity has by no means exhausted its vital power; it is full of new possibilities which demand realisation; and therefore we may expect an inner progression of life and a rejuvenation of morality.

What is true of mankind in general, is especially true of America. The multitude of grave problems cannot discourage a nation which feels in itself so much youthful vigour, that it will not submit to a dark fate, but

is able and ready to mould its own fate, and to aspire to yet greater heights than it has hitherto attained. But to achieve this, moral force is as necessary as unshaken confidence in the power of the spirit. We believe in a bright future for this great country. We believe also in the development in America of such moral strength as will successfully overcome all conflicts and lead to splendid results, for the benefit not only of the American nation, but of all mankind.

THE END

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